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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0452
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0393
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0106
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IR AND SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2019

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SUBJECT: IRAN/TURKMENISTAN: HOW TURKMEN VIEW RECENT EVENTS
IN IRAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia R. Curran. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Decreased travel to and from Iran in the last decade and the lack of independent media and internet access in Turkmenistan have all contributed to a general lack of knowledge or understanding among Turkmen about their neighbor to the south, despite the presence of over a million ethnic Turkmen in northern Iran. In conversations in the weeks following the June 12th presidential election, most Turkmen have shown trademark reticence about discussing foreign affairs, not least the disputed election in neighboring Iran. Comments by several young Turkmen professionals, however -- acquaintances of Iran Watcher who are more comfortable discussing the issue -- reveal a mixture of curiosity, surprise and admiration at recent events there.

THEY WOULD NEVER ALLOW THAT HERE

2, (C) A local UN staff member in his early 30's who has been to Iran said he was amazed when he saw Russian television news coverage of the protests there, particularly the rally in Tehran on June 15th. "Iranians have put up with so much," he said. "I just assumed people accepted the way things are there without question. Why else would women agree to be veiled all the time and for so long?" After seeing the protests, however, his view of Iranians has changed completely, and he no longer sees them as passive. He added that he cannot help but admire the courage of the protesters, and their willingness to "stand up" to the authorities to contest the outcome of the election. Likewise, a young economist we spoke with said that he was watching coverage of the protests in Iran with a group of friends, who commented that, "Iran is at least much more of a democracy than Turkmenistan. Something like that would never be allowed here."

"IRANIANS HAVE HAD ENOUGH"

13. (C) The local head of an international organization, also in his thirties, who speaks Farsi and attended a course at the Iranian diplomatic academy in the early 90s, said the protests show that "it is only a matter of time" before the

regime in Iran will be forced to make major changes in the country or "face another revolution." In his view, "People can only be squeezed so long before they revolt. Iranians have had enough."

14. (C) COMMENT: Many Turkmen profess a lack of knowledge or interest in events in Iran, and even those who are following events there closely say that people here have too many other problems to take notice of anything but their own preoccupations. As one politically savvy ethnic Armenian in Ashgabat noted, "When you have no job, no money, and a sick child for whom you can't afford medical attention, how can you be interested in what's happening anywhere else?" END COMMENT.
CURRAN